



Charlie Hurley . . . "Wycombe have everything to gain, we have a hell of a lot to lose."

Hurley's respect for Wanderers

READING manager Charlie Hurley is under no illusions about tomorrow's F.A. Cup tie against Wycombe at Loakes Park.

Hurley knows full well the size of the task awaiting his players and says: "On the day I expect Wycombe to raise their game considerably. After all, they have nothing at all to lose while we have a hell of a lot. It is a one-off job for them and anything can happen in this type of cup tie."

But anyone who thinks the Reading boss is waiting for the inevitable is wrong. "We are certainly not frightened of Wycombe and in fact, we are looking forward to the game."

Hurley's respect for Wycombe comes from his experience of the non-league game. He told me he and his scouts have watched nearly 70 non-league matches this season in searching of possible players, even delving into the London Spartan and Athenian Leagues.

Reading have watched Wycombe three times already this season, before the cup draw was announced. Said Hurley: "Myself and my assistant have seen Wycombe several times. We had a look at a player but I'm not saying which one."

Although it is only speculation, I gather the player under the Reading microscope was Ian Pearson, who was scoring a lot of goals early in the season.

I asked the Reading manager about his team's performances in Division Three this season. "We got off to a brilliant start but then things started to go wrong and nowadays I can only select from a team of 13 or 14 players. I have tried to sign new players but there is not much money around and it searching for players is a long, hard slog."

"Injuries to some of the players didn't help either," he said.

Currently, Hurley has 17 players under his wing but four of those are transfer listed which suggests they are not happy at the club. He singled out goalkeeper Steve Death and several defensive players who have performed consistently through the season.

Of Robin Friday, the manager says: "Robin had two great seasons with us and was player of the year twice. But he hasn't settled this season and wants a better standard of football. You can't blame him for that."

Hurley remembers last season's F.A. Cup dismissal at Hendon, Wycombe fellow Rothman's Isthmian League club. "Hendon began the game really well and we had to soak up the pressure. They scored through their centre half but we had enough chances in the second half to have wrapped the game up. Although we were disappointed in going out in the first round, we felt that promotion was our main aim and, of course, we got it later in the season."

SOLID TEAM

He feels Wycombe will be a

similar proposition tomorrow. "I won't pick out individual Wycombe players but collectively they are a very solid team. Several of their players are experienced in these situations against league clubs and many of them are capable of playing in Divisions Three and Four of the League."

"Players in non-league football seem to enjoy their football. They are more relaxed and the axe is never over the heads for they have a full time job as well as their football. I suspect many non-league footballers can earn as much as some professionals and in this way, they have the best of both worlds."

This is Charlie Hurley's fifth year in management. As a player he won 40 caps for Ireland while his Football League career included four years at Millwall, 12 at Sunderland and two with Bolton Wanderers.

FIRST CAP

His finest moments came when he won his first cap for Ireland and when he was signed as a professional — "every schoolboy's dream."

Other memorable moments in his career came when Sunderland won promotion from the Second to the First Division in 1964 when he was a player at Roker Park and when Reading clinched their Third Division spot last season.

It seems a good run in the F.A. cup is one of Hurley's next ambitions but he knows that if it is to come this season, he has a large hurdle to clear at Loakes Park tomorrow.

S.E.